

For Land's Sake



2019 Conservation Farm of the Year



Madison County Soil and Water Conservation District held their 39th Conservation Farm of the Year luncheon earlier this year at the White Eagle Conference Center in Hamilton. With 40 guests, including U.S. Congressman Anthony Brindisi and NYS Assemblyman John Salka, Eitienne and Isabel Richards of Gibraltar Farm in North Brookfield were honored for all of their hard work in conservation. The Richards raise 165 Katahdin hair sheep with over 300 lambs. The Richards have built their own 14,000 feet of 7 strand hi-tensile fence and set aside 7 acres of stream and pond buffers with 200 trees and shrubs. They have worked with the Madison County SWCD and the Upper Susquehanna Coalition to design and install a high capacity water system throughout the grazing paddocks. They have utilized the local expertise to maintain critical field diversions, convert previous corn fields into permanent pastures, and learn fence building and grazing management skills.

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USC Cover Crop Program

Mother Nature was not on farmers' side this year when it came to field crops. Spring was wet and cold, hindering farmers from getting onto the fields thus delaying planting of corn. Then came fall where the late planted corn was not ripe enough to harvest and a killing frost didn't come until late. This made it a little difficult for the district at first to get any cover crops planted. Hopping from farm to farm that had a field or two chopped was the key to success this year. The district planted over 1,100 acres in the Upper Susquehanna Watershed using grant funding through the Upper Susquehanna Coalition and State EPF. Our county would not have been this successful if the farmers themselves had to plant the cover crops as many are still trying to get crops harvested.



Dyke Road Flood Mitigation Project

Dyke Road, Town of Sullivan, Village of Chittenango has repeatedly experienced significant flood damage for years. The Madison County SWCD was asked to complete a study of what was happening at this location and what could be done to reduce the likelihood of repeated flooding in the future. Through the course of the study it was determined there were two main causes of the problem. First the stream channel was incised and with every storm event carried significant volumes of bed load down the channel and deposited it in front of the second culvert in the flooding, a set of double culverts. While the culverts had the capacity to pass the water if they remained open, it was determined that each time a flooding event happened it was the result of the culverts plugging with gravel and woody debris from the stream channel. The project was completed in two phases, phase one consisted of installing grade stabilization structures up the stream channel for 300 feet in order to keep the stream from continued head cutting and plugging the culverts with gravel. The second phase consisted of removing the double culverts and replacing them with a single clear span arch so that the woody debris would flow through the culvert and not plug it up. The project was completed in late summer 2019 and tested by the Halloween 2019 storm event. The Highway Superintendent sent us a video of the culvert at the peak of the storm and it was working perfectly.



Culverts Before



New Arch Culvert Installed



Stream Channel Before Grade Stabilization



Stream Channel After Grade Stabilization

Manure Storage Projects

This construction season, the Madison County Soil & Water Conservation District installed two manure storages. One storage in the Oneida Lake Watershed is a 145 feet circular concrete storage that is 14 feet deep and holds 1.6 million gallons of manure. The other storage in the Chenango River Watershed is an L-shaped concrete storage that holds 2.2 million gallons of manure. The below pictures show start to finish of each of the storages



Trees for Tributaries Program:

An Opportunity to Reforest Your Streamside Areas

Do you have a stream running through your property? In Madison County there are over 1,000 miles of stream, so there is a pretty good chance you or your neighbor might! Streams are at their best when the riparian area, or land area next to the stream, is forested. The New York State Department of Environment Conservation's "Trees for Tributaries" Program provides landowners with native trees and shrubs at no cost to reforest these streamside areas.

If the riparian area is not vegetated, or if the vegetation is of poor quality, stream stability is vulnerable. This vegetation, or riparian buffer, provides many services regarding stream stability, band also to terrestrial and aquatic habitat. The riparian area aids in stream stability by slowing flood waters as well as reducing bed and bank erosion. Both aquatic and terrestrial habitats benefit from this area too because shaded streams have lower temperatures and higher oxygen content providing for a more habitable area for invertebrates and fish. Riparian buffers filter out nutrients from stormwater, therefore protecting waterways from nutrient pollution. The diverse, shaded riparian area also provides for a refuge and corridor for land animals as well as attract pollinators and migratory birds.

Additionally, riparian forest buffers can enhance aesthetic and economic value of our properties, may create privacy green screens, or create hunting ground.

Madison County Soil and Water Conservation District is here to help you plan and plant your buffer through this program. The main eligibility requirement is to have a stream on your property. Private and public sites qualify for the program.

If you or someone you know is interested in learning more about the program, please contact Joann Burke (joann-burke@verizon.net) or Troy Bishopp (troy-bishopp@verizon.net) at the Madison County Soil and Water Conservation District or call (315)824-9849 ext. 5.



Agricultural Assessment Filing Deadline is March 1, 2020

Farmers and agricultural use landowners should be thinking about the Agricultural Assessment Program if not already enrolled. This program was established under Agricultural Districts' Law to reduce property tax bills for land in agricultural production by limiting the property tax assessment of such land to its prescribed agricultural assessment value. Owners whose land satisfies the eligibility requirements may apply for an agricultural assessment.

Agricultural Assessment applies only to agricultural land that includes crop land, pasture, orchards, vineyards, sugarbush, support land and crop acreage either set aside or retired under soil conservation programs. Up to 50 acres of farm woodland is eligible for an agricultural assessment per eligible tax parcel. Land and water used for aquacultural production are eligible, as is land under a structure within which crops, livestock or livestock products are produced.

Eligibility is determined by the assessor or board of assessors where the application is filed. Land generally must consist of 7 or more acres that were used in the past 2 years for production for sale of crops, livestock or livestock products. Agricultural producing land less than 7 acres that is adjacent to a larger producing tract may be eligible as well. The annual gross sale of agricultural products must generally average \$10,000 or more for the past 2 years. If an agricultural enterprise is less than 7 acres, it may qualify if average annual gross sales equal \$50,000 or more. A commercial horse boarding operation may qualify if there are at least 7 acres of land, the operation boards at least 10 horses and the operation receives \$10,000 or more in gross receipts annually.

To apply, the landowner's first step is to contact their town assessor to find out if they qualify. The application and soil group worksheets need to be submitted to the town assessor no later than March 1st.

DON'T WAIT UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE!

2020 Tree Sale Order Forms Coming Soon

Order forms for the 2020 Madison County Soil and Water Conservation District tree and shrub sale will be available the first week of January on our website. If you are currently on the district's email list you will receive the order form around the same time. All pre-paid orders will be due on March 15, 2020 with pick up on April 18th. If you are looking for trees or shrubs that are not currently offered please contact Joann Burke know and we will try to offer them the following year.



Chittenango Team 2 Move on to State Envirothon Competition



Since January, teams of high school students across Madison, Chenango, Onondaga and Cayuga Counties were busy studying environmental topics for the Annual CNY Regional Envirothon which was held on April 25, 2019 Friends of Roger’s Center in Sherburne. This annual outdoor, hands-on, environmental education competition is run by Madison, Chenango, Onondaga, and Cayuga County Soil & Water Conservation Districts. Teams of five students in grades 9-12 are tested on topics including: wildlife, aquatics, forestry, soils/land use, and a current environmental issue. The teams will compete for a chance to represent their county in the New York State competition.

This year’s event brought a total of 150 students in 30 teams from the 4 counties out for the event. Representative schools from Madison County were Brookfield, Cazenovia, Chittenango and Oneida.

After a long day, and a tough competition, the winners emerged. The Madison County Envirothon Champions were the Chittenango Team 2!

The Chittenango team attended the New York State Envirothon on the campus of Hobart and William Smith Colleges in Geneva on May 22 and 23.

The CNY Regional Envirothon committee would like to sincerely thank the Friends of Rogers Center staff, sponsors, and volunteers that made the 2019 CNY Regional Envirothon a success. Soil and Water Conservation Districts across the state help organize annual County and Regional Envirothon competitions. Essential support is provided by school science teachers, school districts and local businesses that donate supporting funds. To learn more about the Envirothon please visit its website at: www.nysenvirothon.net.

In the World of Grazing

John Muir said, “Of all the paths you take in life, make sure a few of them are dirt.” In 2019, on the path to implementing conservation projects there was a lot of walking on dirt, fields, hedge-row margins and along streams looking for opportunities to improve the environmental context while implementing tools that also help a farm/landowner achieve some financial benefits.

Whether helping plan out a grazing system, provide project coordination, plant trees, build fence, install plumbing, help with grazing events or provide outreach support, this year is like every year—busy.

